

*Clairee*

trouble with the father, the son, and the Holy Ghost.

SHELBY. Well, I'm pretty religious, but that stuff makes me feel kind of creepy.

TRUVY. Well, I'm torn. I've got two sons that I'm afraid are going to hell in a handcart and a semi-daughter that strives to be the kind of girl Jesus would bring home to Mama. I don't know what to think. I don't understand those people . . . but they sometimes seem to have a peace about things that I've never had. Maybe I'm just jealous. (*Annelle enters, smacks the radio to make it play. Clairee changes subject.*)

CLAIREE. And Marshall is so thoughtful. He brought me this pin. (*Clairee reveals a piece of jewelry under her beauty smock.*) It's gold and enamel.

TRUVY. It's a bug.

CLAIREE. It's fine jewelry. It's little eyes are rubies, my birthstone.

SHELBY. Does Marshall have a . . . uh . . . you know . . . friends?

CLAIREE. We talked a little bit about that. I'm such a nosy old thing. I asked him how he . . . met people. 'Cause in my day you could tell by a man's carriage and demeanor which side his bread was buttered on. But today? In this day and age? Who knows? I asked Marshall, "How can you tell?" and he said, "All gay men have track lighting. And all gay men are named Mark, Rick, or Steve." He is such a nut . . . track lighting. (*Everyone laughs.*)

OUISER. (*Enters carrying a sack.*) 'Morning.

TRUVY. 'Morning, Ouiser!

OUISER. What's so funny?

SHELBY. Miss Clairee was just telling us the true story of track lighting.

OUISER. I love mine. It highlights my new artwork.

CLAIREE. Since when do you have track lighting?

OUISER. About three weeks. It's in my foyer and up the stairs. It was my grandson's idea.

SHELBY. I haven't seen him in ages. How is he?

OUISER. Steve's fine. I brought you all some tomatoes. First of the season. I didn't expect to see you in town, Shelby.

SHELBY. Well, I'm here.

OUISER. Take some tomatoes back home with you. There's plenty. Boy! Your hair's short. Looks good!

SHELBY. Thank you, Miss Ouiser. Jack Jr. loves tomatoes . . . he smears them on the cafe curtains in the kitchen.

TRUVY. Your mama says you have become an incredible gourmet cook.

SHELBY. I try. When we first married all Jackson wanted was meat and potatoes and vegetables just the way his mama made them . . . cooked to mush. But I've broken him of that. I even got some pâté down him last week. He swore it was dog food. Jack Jr. loved it, though.

OUISER. Clairee. How many tomatoes do you want? Tomatoes have no calories and are full of . . . *(She throws away a wormy rotten one.)* . . . things.

CLAIREE. Ouiser, you're almost chipper today. Why are you in such a good mood? Did you run over a small child or something?

OUISER. Do you or do you not want tomatoes?

CLAIREE. Don't give me all of 'em.

OUISER. Somebody's got to take them. I hate 'em. I try not to eat healthy food if I can help it. The sooner this body wears out the better off I'll be. I have trouble getting enough grease into my diet.

ANNELLE. Then why do you grow them?

OUISER. I am an old Southern woman. We're supposed to put on funny looking hats and ugly old dresses and grow vegetables in the dirt. Don't ask me why. I don't make the rules.

CLAIREE. You should get some gloves. Your hands look like a couple of T-bone steaks.

SHELBY. Health is the most important thing, Miss Ouiser. Trust me on this.

OUISER. And. While I have everyone's attention. This morning I went to my mailbox and found that someone . . . *(Directed at Annelle.)* has put me on the mailing list for the Riverview Baptist Church. Lucky me. I am now receiving chain letters for Christ.

ANNELLE. They aren't chain letters. They're part of my

prayer group's "Reach out and touch" project. We were each supposed to write somebody in the community that we thought might be in spiritual trouble and invite them to worship. (*Ouiser plops down a big wad of mail.*) I guess you made everybody's list.

OUISER. I think it is in the worst possible taste to pray for perfect strangers.

CLAIREE. "Reach out" to Ouiser and you'll pull back a bloody stump. Shelby! I just realized! You've saved me a phone call. Next Friday Sis Orelle and I are driving up to Monroe and we'd like to take you and Jackson to dinner if we may.

SHELBY. Uh . . . I can't Friday night. I'm sorry. What's the occasion?

CLAIREE. This is going to sound a little silly, but we're coming up to go to the Little Theatre. We have tickets to a play.

TRUVY. I didn't know you went to see anything that didn't have a goalpost at either end.

CLAIREE. Up to now, I haven't. But Sis and I decided at bridge one day that we needed to keep up. We wanted to expose ourselves to a little more culture. And that's not easy to come by in this neck of the woods.

TRUVY. Exactly what are you "exposing" yourself to?

CLAIREE. I don't know. Something. The last thing we saw there was pretty good. It was Shakespeare. I was a little apprehensive at first, but you know what? When you get right down to it . . . he writes pretty straightforward stuff. I have to admit when they hide behind curtains and put little masks over their faces to fool people . . . that got kind of silly. Sis fell for it, but I didn't.

OUISER. Sis Orelle is so dumb. She thinks Sherlock Holmes is a subdivision.

CLAIREE. Anyway. Sis and I like it so much, we're planning a theatre trip to New York.

TRUVY. New York?! Oh, Clairee. I'm green with envy. Promise me you'll go to the first floor of Bloomingdales and come back and tell me everything. *Woman's Day* says it's impossible to walk through there and not get made up.